



USAGE STRATEGIES OF MOODLE- A MOOC PLATFORM IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

E-learning is an evolution in educational environment relied on technology. The main focus of e-learning is continuous learning and development by utilizing technologies and made learning possible from anywhere at any time. By utilizing open source platforms we can easily set up an e – learning portal. With this we conducted a study based on survey to understand the adaptation, advantages and drawbacks of the system. The results describe the learning strategies using Moodle and pointed out the need of planning and communication for using the platform.

Keywords: moodle; mooc; e learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly advancing world, are we still sitting in class rooms and listening to a teacher's lecture? However much we have evolved in any other activity, this is a sphere which has remained practically the same as decades before.

Before decades we had distant courses in the form of correspondence education and only 5 to 10 percentage among the registered ones completed the courses. In this digital age, E-learning is a computer based teaching system allowing us to use electronic resources anywhere, anytime, thus e-learning has become an important aid for teaching and plays a major role in digitalization. With advanced technologies and internet the learning teaching platform moved to online portals and enable network based transfer of skills. Online management system enables teachers and students to interact and helps to manage assignments.

As everything now prefixed with an 'e', a novel way of education too is emerging. A

computer and an internet source can take the roles of a teacher, mentor and an examiner. Any doubts, any points that need clearing, all can be done via the internet and this cover a large area of Graphics, Videos and images retain memory, enabling us to recall anything easier. We can proceed in our own time, never having to wait for others, thus increasing the efficiency of our time. E Learning reduces manpower too, which can cut cost and remove human error. Most of the e learning sites are made to adapt to the user's needs and our 'e' makes everything easier.

A. Advantages of E- Learning

E learning portals serves as central repository of knowledge and includes interactive elements to facilitate interaction and communication. We have an open source option, Moodle, to create and use our own portals. One of the main advantages of e learning is its quicker delivery of content to a massive group of learners which helps to reduce the learning time by 40% compared with traditional class room learning.



Figure 1

B. Drawbacks of E - Learning

Mechanization affects people badly too. Unemployment is a major problem related to e-learning. Whenever this process starts, the requirements of teachers are reduced in Universities and colleges. This is a social issue that has faced debates.

Moreover special care and assistance required by students cannot be provided by a machine. Mental connection and correlation can only be created if an actual mind is present. A machine that dispenses an item cannot realize whether the receiver got it or whether he is satisfied, but a shopkeeper can understand the feelings of buyer. However much we depend on Artificial Intelligence, some things can only be gained from humans. Also all the demerits of social media and video games like health issues, social isolation and addiction can grip an e-learner. As with anything, too much is never too good.

II. MOODLE

Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment (Moodle) is an open source learning system developed to aid teaching and learning. It provides a virtual environment as an alternative for course management in Universities and other institutions. The system was developed by Martin Dougiamas and made available to use since 2002. Moodle was licensed under GNU public license and we are allowed to extend or modify for both commercial and noncommercial use. Now Moodle is widely adopted by European countries as a virtual learning environment. The system has been continually developing and growing with enormous registered users.[1][2]

A university department can easily change the platform to Moodle by placing the server in department and students can access it through the browser by connecting to internet at anytime from anywhere. A teacher can use tools in the platform to create and manage the courses and enroll the students to a particular course. The Moodle also enable an educator to create discussions and chats to improve the interactivity among students and teachers.

Higher education has become more expensive and the cost of attending a technical course has increased. This leads to the inaccessibility of these courses by majority of students in a country like India. IIT's IIM's and

Central Universities in India offers free online courses-MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). The main aim of MOOC is to increase the participation by utilizing the digital technology and interactive platforms.

Every word in the expansion of 'MOOC' is exploring the meaning and aim of the platform. The platform allows thousands of users to access the same course from anywhere at a time and opens massive usage, the resources are available online and free of cost.

Moodle comes with a number of tools to support easy publishing of the content that allows making MOOC a reality. Also forums and chat rooms available provide a means of communication via interaction. Forums allow more time for a student to gather information and co-ordinate, at the same time can use chats for quick responses. A teacher can use it as a medium to conduct online examinations, assigning course assignments and can mark the scores in grade cards within the time limit. The students get an opportunity to submit their answers and view the result. Moreover a teacher can keep their students engaged in learning activities and increase utilization of valuable time.

Moodle also offers security services and as first line of defense it provides LDAP authentication. The client must pass authentication by providing credentials via an SSL connection. The Moodle based intranet ensures role based access to support the integrity of the content.[3][4]

Moodle platform offers three levels of uses, Administrator to manage the whole system, a teacher to create and manage the courses and assessments and a student to respond and interact with the queries.

III. METHODOLOGY AND KEY FINDINGS

An online feedback survey circulated among the teachers in university and nearby colleges aim to assess the views of academicians for using Moodle as a platform for learning.

The paper presents the opinion of the respondents in various departments. The survey revealed that the academicians in Kerala have basic understanding of the portal and majority used the platform for academic purpose. The teachers expanded their understanding about the Moodle portal through the materials available in internet and training programs organized by various departments. Students used the platform

and material 2 to 3 times per week for submitting their assignments on time and this usage never affect their community interactions.

The teachers use Moodle as an e learning aid for reasons that it is very easy to handle a massive group of students and helps in better learning (summarized in figure 2). Also 39.6% among the respondents identified technical skill as an obstacle to use the platform and at the same time 33.3 % claimed that there are no obstacles to use the platform. Only 6.3 % say that e leaning will reduce the job opportunities in academic field, the result given in figure 3. The e – learning has a big future and continues to grow in a country like India.

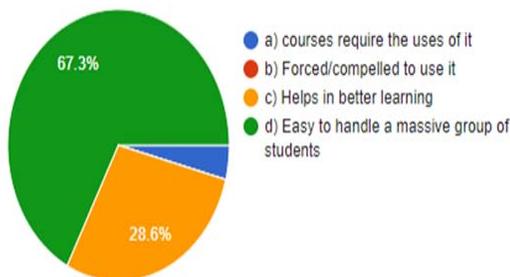


Figure 2

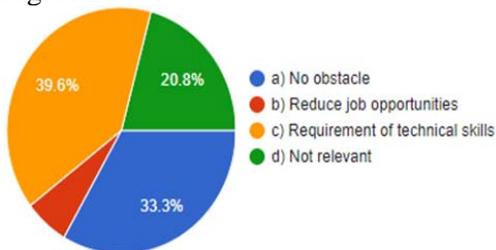


Figure 3

The majority of the teachers viewed Moodle as a new tool to enable collaborative communication and study and as a support for teaching and learning but at the same time most of the respondents prefer interactivity and collaboration in class to improve the effectiveness of learning.

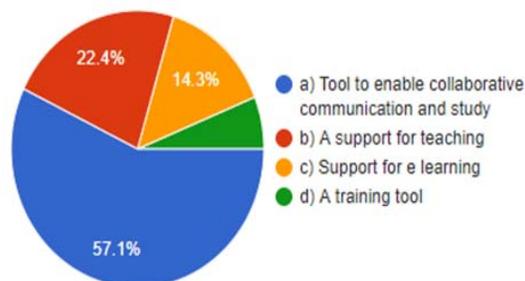


Figure 4

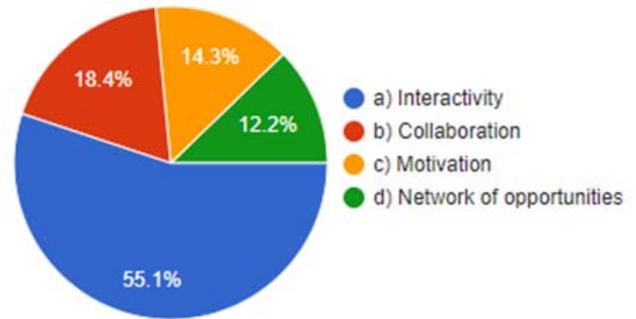


Figure 5

Almost all the respondents say that technology, Instructor characteristics and student’s characteristics are the requirement for the success of Moodle platform in an organization (given in Figure 6). The teachers choose Moodle as their platform because it helps to manage the students by engaging them in learning activities. Also it is easy to use and helps to calculate marks and grades.

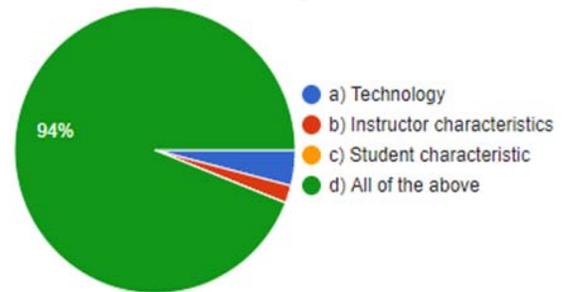


Figure 6

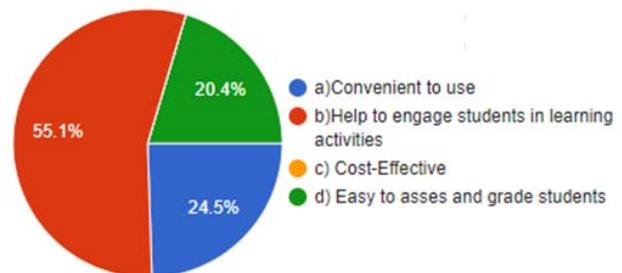


Figure 7

IV. CONCLUSION

The findings describe the need of an environment to promote individualized learning and respondents know about the supports given by the platform. The survey revealed the scope of an online portal Moodle for e learning in Kerala and it has already influenced the academic curriculum design. Digital content delivery and smart class rooms are a reality but can be made more so with proper targeting of requirements.

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